

# Malaysia: the 2020 putsch for Malay Islam supremacy

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## ABSTRACT

Many people were surprised by the sudden fall of Mahathir Mohamad and the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government on 21 February 2020, barely two years after winning the historic May 2018 general elections. This article argues that the fall was largely due to the following factors: the ideology of Ketuanan Melayu Islam (Malay Islam Supremacy); the Mahathir-Anwar dispute; Mahathir's own role in trying to reduce the role of the non-Malays in the government; and the manufactured fear among the Malay polity that the Malays and Islam were under threat. It concludes that the majority of the Malay population, and the Malay establishment, are not ready to share political power with the non-Malays.

## Introduction

Many people were shocked when the *Barisan Nasional* (BN or National Front) government lost its majority in the May 2018 general elections. After all, BN had been in power since independence in 1957 and the Federation of Malaysia was generally regarded as a stable, one-party regime. What was even more remarkable was that the person responsible for Malaysia's first regime change, Mahathir Mohammad, was also Malaysia's erstwhile longest serving prime minister. He had headed the BN from 1981 to 2003 and was widely regarded as Malaysia's strongman. In 2017, he assumed leadership of the then-opposition *Pakatan Harapan* (PH or Alliance of Hope) coalition and led the coalition to victory on 9 May 2018. He is remarkable as well for the fact that he became, at the age of 93, the world's oldest elected leader.<sup>1</sup>

There was great hope that Malaysia would join the global club of democracy but less than two years on, the PH government fell apart on 21 February 2020. Mahathir was widely expected to be reappointed to head a new coalition, *Perikatan Nasional* (National Alliance), but on 1 March 2020, one of his former colleagues, Muhyiddin Yassin, was sworn in as Malaysia's eighth prime minister.

This article will lay out the major causes of the sudden change, in particular, the ideology of *Ketuanan Melayu Islam* (Malay Islam Supremacy), the underlying currents that led to the change of government, and the consequences of the change. The central argument presented here is that the political ideology of *Ketuanan Melayu Islam* was the major ideological trigger for the collapse of the PH government and the political consequences are bound to be disappointing for those who think that Malaysia can be a successful example of a multi-cultural and multi-religious polity. To put it bluntly, the majority of the Malay population, and the Malay establishment, are not ready to share power with the non-Malays.

### Ketuanan Melayu Islam

Since the 1969 racial riots, UMNO's core ideology has been *Ketuanan Melayu Islam*. The narrative was best summarised by a senior UMNO functionary as:

Let us make no mistake – the political system in Malaysia is founded on Malay dominance. The Malays must be (as) politically dominant in Malaysia as the Chinese are politically dominant in Singapore. That is the premise from which we should start . . . [It] was born out of a sacrosanct social contract which preceded national independence. There have been moves to question, to set aside and to violate, this contract that has threatened the stability of the system.<sup>2</sup>

The narrative in simple terms is this: the Malay race are the real owners of *Tanah Melayu* (Land of the Malays), the historical name for Malaya. As the indigenous people of Malaysia, they must dominate politically under the concept of *Ketuanan Melayu Islam*. Non-Malays can live in harmony in Malaysia, but they cannot have equal political rights and can never hold the top positions in government and key institutions. This narrative became known as the Malaysian '*social contract*'. The social contract, as expounded by Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad in 1986, is taken to mean a *quid pro quo* arrangement which provides non-Malays with citizenship in return for their recognition of Malay supremacy and the 'special rights' of the Malays.<sup>3</sup>

UMNO put this ideology in practice in its six decades long rule and the wider Malay community felt that their dominant position was enforced by

UMNO's relentless pursuit of the 'Malay First' policy in all spheres. In practice this translated into a host of extensive benefits to the Malay community via the affirmative action programme, the New Economic Policy (NEP), first introduced in 1970.<sup>4</sup>

When the PH government took power in May 2018, initially the Malay polity accepted the new government because the top two positions, prime minister and deputy prime minister, were held by Malays. They trusted Mahathir because he was the man who vigorously implemented the racial discriminatory NEP policies when he was prime minister from 1981–2003. Mahathir had a reputation of being a champion of *Ketuanan Melayu Islam* cemented by his well-known book, *The Malay Dilemma*.<sup>5</sup>

The PH government consisted of four parties: Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM), Democratic Action Party (DAP), Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) and Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah).<sup>6</sup> PPBM was a breakaway party from UMNO and thus shared its ideology. It was established by Mahathir and Muhyiddin Yassin. DAP was a Chinese-based multiracial party led by Lim Kit Siang and his son Lim Guan Eng, PKR was a Malay-majority multiracial party led by Anwar Ibrahim while Amanah was a breakaway party from PAS (Parti Islam Malaysia). Unlike PAS, Amanah did not reject multiracialism and did not seek to turn Malaysia into an Islamic state as soon as possible. Hence, PH was, more or less, truly multiracial as it represented most of Malaysia's diverse population.

### The underlying currents

There were three concurrent political currents that largely caused the disintegration of the PH government. They were: a UMNO/PAS political pact; the dysfunctional PH government and Mahathir's own role. Each will be examined in turn.

#### *UMNO/PAS's Muafakat Nasional*

In September 2019, one of Malaysia's core political conventions was broken. The United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) signed a political pact with Parti Islam Malaysia (PAS). This pact, called *Muafakat Nasional* (national consensus), essentially brought these two long-standing antagonists into a

single, unbeatable, political force in the Malay community. Since independence, it was understood that Malay votes in Malaysia were basically divided between UMNO (the Malay nationalists) and PAS (the Malay Islamists who wanted to transform Malaysia into an Islamic state). Prior to 2018, it would have been politically unthinkable for UMNO and PAS to work together. In fact, Hadi Awang, the leader of PAS had famously proclaimed that UMNO was a *kafir* party when the two were in political competition.<sup>7</sup>

Less than a month later, all the large right-wing Malay and Islamic groups staged the Malay Dignity Congress (MDC) which the leaders of the four most important Malay-

majority political parties attended: UMNO, PAS, PKR<sup>8</sup> and PPBM. The main organiser Zainal Kling<sup>9</sup> said in his opening speech that Malaysia is for the Malays and those who oppose (*read Chinese and Indian Malaysians*) the 'social contract' and Islam's position as the official religion have to be fought against. He even threatened non-Malays that if they opposed the 'social contract' then the Malays should suspend the contract, i.e., strip non-Malays of their citizenship. In many countries, his entire speech would probably fall under the umbrella of hate speech. The keynote at MDC was delivered by none other than Mahathir himself.<sup>10</sup>

The MDC was a culmination of a long campaign by all the Malay right-wing political forces to bring about the downfall of the PH government as soon as it took power in May 2018. They were unhappy because they felt that the non-Malays had too much influence in the PH administration and that Malay supremacy was under threat. Several issues created the perception that the PH government was 'controlled' by the Chinese, in particular, the DAP. This narrative was very successfully used by UMNO/PAS in the Malay polity.

Two of the key issues used to support this contention were:

- (1) The appointment of non-Malays to key positions widely regarded as 'reserved' for Malays. These include the positions of Finance Minister (Lim Guan Eng – an ethnic Chinese person), Chief Justice of Malaysia (Richard Malanjum – a person of indigenous origin from Sabah) and Attorney-General (Tommy Thomas – an ethnic Indian person). Mr Thomas and Mr Lim were the first minorities to assume those posts in 55 and 44 years respectively. More strikingly, Malanjum and Thomas were Christians, something the right-wing Malay groups deemed

inimical to Islam. PAS had openly accused DAP of promoting Christianity.<sup>11</sup>

The wider narrative was that the PH government was too dominated by non-Malays. More than half of the MPs in the PH coalition were non-Malays and 11 of the 28 ministers in the PH federal cabinet were non-Malays (contrast this with the new Muhyiddin Yassin cabinet established after the fall of the PH, where only 5 out of 31 ministers are non-Malays).

- (2) The PH government was trying to remove 'Malay rights' by stealth. In particular, the right-wing groups pointed to the PH government's initial plan to sign the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). Mahathir even announced that Malaysia would sign ICERD during a speech at the annual UN General Assembly meeting. For Malay hardliners, it was seen as the first step in removing Malay supremacy. UMNO, PAS and Malay right-wing groups organised huge public demonstrations against the government. A group of Malay legal academics even submitted a paper which convinced the Conference of Rulers to reject the ICERD. It dishonestly claimed that the Malay Sultans could be prosecuted if ICERD is ratified.<sup>12</sup> Many Malay right wing groups also claimed that once ICERD was ratified, Malaysia would next sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). This, they claimed, would extinguish Malay 'special rights' and Malay supremacy since it was incompatible under the ICCPR which ordained that all citizens must enjoy equal rights.

### *Dysfunctional PH government*

One of the key weaknesses of the PH administration was its inability to work in a cohesive manner. Each component party did its own thing. Ministers contradicted each other in public, the most famous examples being in relation to the flying national car project and the Lynas rare earth issue. On both these issues, the cabinet was effectively split, and the ministers involved had no qualms in telling the media that they disagreed with their cabinet colleagues.<sup>13</sup> The Westminster 'collective ministerial responsibility' norm was simply not practised.

There are two plausible explanations for the lack of cohesion. First, the PH coalition was put together not because they share similar ideologies or political beliefs, but simply because they want to get rid of Najib Razak and UMNO. In other words, the four parties, especially PPBM, have little in common with each other.

PPBM was a UMNO splinter-party and thus was ideologically similar to UMNO; it is fair to assume that these former UMNO members carried their ideological convictions into the PPBM. There were essentially three types who joined PPBM: first and the most obvious, strong supporters of Mahathir; second, those who were forced out of UMNO by Najib's camp; and third, UMNO members who suddenly found there was an alternative to UMNO once the PPBM was established. Those from this last group, often called the 'silent gang' inside UMNO, were against Najib but did not show their opposition as they were afraid of being forced out of UMNO. Once they realised that the PPBM under Mahathir presented a similar ideological vehicle, with the president and the top leadership consisting of ex-UMNO leaders, they flocked to PPBM.

The net result is that the PPBM, with UMNO's DNA, found it awkward to work with PH. PH consisted of parties that were in opposition to UMNO for decades. Suddenly in government, they had to work with PPBM people who were displaying the same *Ketuanan Melayu Islam* attitude as UMNO. This led to clashes, especially between PPBM and DAP, over PPBM's instinct to have more pro-Malay policies while DAP wanted to promote a non-racial style of politics.

Moreover, the level of trust among the PH parties (PKR, DAP and Amanah) did not extend to PPBM. Lim Kit Siang and Lim Guan Eng, DAP's top two leaders, were known to be extremely close to Mohammad (Mat) Sabu, the leader of Amanah. Both had spent time together detained under the draconian Internal Security Act (ISA).<sup>14</sup> Anwar Ibrahim has served about ten years in prison on two separate occasions. Hence the top leaders in PH had all served prison time. In contrast, none of the top PPBM leadership had served any prison time, and in fact, most of them had served as ministers either at the federal or state level. Mahathir was prime minister, Muhyiddin, the number two in PPBM, had served as minister at both the federal and state level for more than two decades. Mukhriz

Mahathir, PPBM's number three and Mahathir's political heir, had served as chief minister of Kedah.

Second, other than five members, none of the ministers appointed to the new PH federal cabinet in May 2018 had ever held any public office. They were simply inexperienced in how to get the civil service to work for them, which was of course key to the delivery of services to the public.

On top of the inexperience, it was widely known that the civil service was, in practice, an extension of UMNO. After more than six decades in power, the lines between the civil service and UMNO were blurred and the top echelons of the civil service were all pro-UMNO appointees. Some openly sabotaged PH's policies. Many senior civil servants were particularly angry with some DAP ministers. In a civil service that was ninety per cent Malays, DAP Ministers and political appointees were described by some as 'arrogant' and disrupting the 'Malay-way' of doing things. One particular complaint was the way Lim Guan Eng, the finance minister from DAP, was allowing his political secretary to take charge of many key economic issues. Many senior mandarins from the Finance ministry and other ministries were offended when Lim's political secretary chaired meetings and directed them. The 'Malay way' of doing things was for the ministers to chair meetings if senior mandarins took part in them. The mandarins were not used to taking orders from anyone below the rank of minister or deputy minister.<sup>15</sup>

Collectively, the dysfunctional government, lack of experience in controlling the civil service and disloyalty had the effect of making the upper echelons of the civil service even more unreceptive towards the PH government. Their attitude became 'do the least possible' as many believed that PH would only last for one term and BN would get back into power sooner or later. Thus, the senior civil servants decided that it was best to 'play safe', to the detriment of the PH administration. They knew that if they displayed too much enthusiasm for the PH government, their careers would be 'blocked' once UMNO came back into power. This was exactly what happened when the change of government took place on 1 March 2020.

## Mahathir's role

Mahathir himself played a key role in the destruction of his own administration. This related to his actions on the succession issue and his attempts to create a new Malay-centric coalition in early 2019 which led to the political crisis and the downfall of the PH administration.

It was clear early on that the PH government was unstable after its first anniversary in May 2019. When Mahathir took over as leader of PH in 2017, one of the political deals made was for Mahathir to be prime minister for only two years before he handed over power to Anwar Ibrahim. Anwar's supporters initially sang the praises of Mahathir but when Mahathir announced that he needed 'more time' to 'clean up the mess' in 2019, and might not hand power to Mr Anwar in May 2020, the mood soured. The truth is, Mahathir had no intention of handing power over to Anwar, despite his public pro- nouncements. In a revealing interview he gave after he lost power, he said the Malay polity cannot accept Anwar as prime minster as Anwar was 'too liberal'.<sup>16</sup> He said:

Anwar is perceived by the Malays as being liberal. He talked about multiracialism when he left Umno, and he created a (multiracial) party to go against me . . . Anwar left (Umno) and created a party for all (races) – liberal. Then, he got the support of Democratic Action Party (DAP) . . . – his philosophy was liberalism. The Malays cannot accept this as they fear their position will be threatened.

In other words, according to Mahathir, the Malay polity were afraid that if Anwar became prime minister they may lose their political power and share it with non-Malays. On top of this, the use of the word 'liberal' had another meaning to the Malay polity – Mahathir used the word as a code-word to indicate that the Malays were socially conservative and could not accept the persistent rumours about Anwar being homosexual (or bisexual). Anwar had been jailed for sodomy twice and this has been the number one issue used against him in the Malay polity for decades.<sup>17</sup>

Thus from the inception of the 2018 coalition government, Mahathir had no real intention to hand power over to Anwar – which created political tensions that were bound to erupt in 2020, the projected date for the transfer of power.

The shadowboxing between Mahathir and Anwar extended to the way



Mahathir tried to weaken Anwar politically. Anwar's main challenger in PKR was Azmin Ali, the PKR deputy president. Mahathir encouraged their rivalry by appointing Azmin as Minister of Economic Affairs (MEA). This new cabinet portfolio was widely seen as equal to, or more powerful than the Minister of Finance as the MEA handles most of government spending, especially the gigantic subsidy programmes for the Malay and *bumiputera* ('sons of the soil') community. It was clear that this powerful portfolio would allow Azmin to build his base of support via patronage inside PKR and weaken Anwar's support within that party. This was made clear when Azmin and ten other PKR MPs left PKR during the political crisis preceding the 'coup' and joined PPBM to support the Muhyiddin-led government.

Another important factor is Mahathir's insecurity within Malay society. As mentioned earlier, Mahathir was rattled by the political pact between UMNO and PAS in 2019. To understand this, one needs to go back to the results of the 2018 general elections. The rural Malay vote was essentially divided equally among the three core Malay parties: PPBM, UMNO and PAS. When UMNO and PAS came together, it was clear to Mahathir that the new pact would overshadow PPBM easily among Malay voters. This was evidenced by the fact that the UMNO-PAS pact easily won three by-elections in a row, primarily on the back of strong Malay support, using the narrative that PH was 'controlled' by the DAP.<sup>18</sup> At this point, Mahathir was looking for ways to strengthen his own position and that of PPBM among Malay voters. He, and other Malay PPBM leaders, understood that if the perception persists that PH is a 'Chinese DAP government', PPBM might lose most of its seats in rural Malay areas in the next general election. Worse, PH will probably lose the election itself if the coalition could not expand its Malay base.

At this point, Mahathir was looking at options to strengthen the 'Malay force' in PH. At the end of 2019, the state of the parties in PH was: PPBM 26, DAP 42, PKR 50, Amanah 11. PPBM, the 'Malay nationalist party' was clearly outnumbered by DAP and PKR, both 'multiracial' parties.

Among the options canvassed was taking in an entire bloc of UMNO MPs (defectors from that party) to strengthen PPBM's position in PH. The preferred option among the hardliners in PPBM was a completely new coalition of UMNO (+BN), PAS, PPBM and Azmin's faction in PKR. The PKR faction under Anwar and DAP would be kicked out of the new coalition, thus Mahathir would lead

a Malay-centric coalition which would win the next general elections easily since all the Malay voters would support this new coalition. Background discussions were held among PPBM, UMNO and PAS towards the end of 2019, with Mahathir's knowledge but he was not directly involved. The hardliners in PPBM were no less incensed with the DAP whom they perceived as opposing and blocking too many policies deemed important to the Malay elite, including a multi-billion highway concession.<sup>19</sup> The Malay elite did not like the DAP's policy of trying to stamp out crony-deals and was of the opinion that this sort of thing would not have happened had a PPBM (read Malay) been in charge of the finance ministry.

In sum, Mahathir's search for a new, more Malay-centric coalition added to the instability of the PH coalition and created an opportunity for the Malay hardliners in PPBM to pursue the ideal of a Malay-centric government. Mahathir directly hinted that he was open to working with defectors from UMNO and, to a lesser degree, PAS. This was exactly what the PPBM hardliners worked towards and succeeded in achieving. What Mahathir did not expect was that the strong *Ketuanan Melayu Islam* nationalists in PPBM were open to working with everyone in UMNO, including tainted leaders such as Najib and Zahid Hamidi, both of whom are facing corruption trials in the courts. In Mahathir's mind, bringing together a new Malay-centric coalition did not include the tainted leaders in UMNO – in particular Najib whom he fought so hard to remove as prime minister. His overall plan was to bring in UMNO MPs and other senior leaders who were willing to abandon Najib and the existing leadership under Zahid. Over time, PPBM and UMNO would merge into a single entity under his leadership. This was crucial as it meant that the merged entity would end up as the single largest party in the PH coalition. Mahathir would reign supreme again and would be able to do the two things he wanted, namely, sideline the 'Chinese problem' (read the DAP), and secondly, as the single largest party, he would have the excuse not to hand power over to Anwar Ibrahim. In the longer term, this would also ensure that Mukhriz Mahathir, his son, will be in a position to lay claim to the office of prime minister.

Where Mahathir miscalculated was the speed with which the Malay hardliners moved to form a new Malay-centric government. Muhyiddin and other PPBM leaders were keen to establish the new coalition quickly and were open to working with UMNO, including corruption-tainted leaders like Najib and

others. They needed as many MPs as possible and wanted entire parties to join them. Their primary aim was to marginalise Anwar and the DAP.

Mahathir could not agree to this (as mentioned, he wanted UMNO without Najib and the others who had been charged with corruption) and he thought he still held sway among the PPBM leadership. He miscalculated the depth of *Ketuanan Melayu Islam* devotees among the PPBM leadership. These people simply did not want the 'Chinese' DAP in government and wanted a return to the UMNO/BN style of government where the Chinese components had no real political power.<sup>20</sup> When Mahathir refused to go along with their plan and instead announced that he was offering an alternative, a government of national unity, which included the DAP, the hardliners in PPBM rallied around Muhyiddin Yassin.<sup>21</sup> From that moment onwards, Muhyiddin had the numbers from a majority consisting of MPs from PPBM, UMNO/PAS, and Sarawak's GPS coalition. Earlier, Sarawak GPS had already announced that they will 'never work' with DAP claiming that DAP was 'arrogant'.<sup>22</sup>

### Quo Vadis and lessons

The consequences of the fall of the PH government are many, not least the creation of a total *Ketuanan Melayu Islam* government. The core parties in the new Perikatan Nasional (national alliance) government are all Malay-Muslims and all of them subscribe to the ideology of Malay Islam supremacy wholeheartedly. They do not pretend to be a multi-racial government; pursuing the goals of the Malay agenda is their number one priority. The most obvious consequence of this approach is that they have left the non-Malays (Chinese and Indians) and the indigenous tribespeople of Sabah and Sarawak out in the cold politically. The nature of its founding means that, in future, it must, and will, practice 'Malay Islam First' in all public policies. PAS, which has not held power at the federal level for more than four decades must, and will, pursue Islamisation consistent with what it has been fighting for since its inception. PAS has repeatedly said that some Islamic laws should apply to non-Muslims, in a country where about 40% of its population are non-Muslims.<sup>23</sup> The 'Malay Islam First' policy will dominate the new government until the next general elections in 2023.

If there is a clear lesson to be learnt from these happenings, it is that the 'path-dependence' theory applies to Malaysia. According to this theory, history

matters as decisions taken decades earlier will set present and future outcomes. In the 1970s, a deliberate policy, the NEP, was instituted as part of a broader agenda to cement Malay political supremacy. Over the years, with the rise of political Islam, it became Malay Islam supremacy. After decades of indoctrination, the majority of the Malay polity became conditioned to this ideology and cannot now accept Malaysia as a multi-cultural or multi-religious nation. Far more importantly, they cannot accept equal political rights for the non-Malays. They have been told that if the Chinese (read DAP) get power, Malay supremacy and Islam will be under threat. The only way for the Malays to hold onto their political supremacy, is to deny the Chinese and other non-Malays equal political rights. The use of the narrative 'social contract' has totally skewed the political thinking of an overwhelming majority of the Malay polity. Many younger Malays actually think that there is nothing wrong with Malay supremacy since it was 'agreed' to by the non-Malays in return for citizenship. Moreover, the Malays are the real indigenous people.

The Malaysia example may go a long way in explaining why it is so difficult to democratise a political system if there are existing racial and religious cleavages, coupled with a political ideology based on a narrative, however skewed, about who the 'original masters' of the land are. There are strong parallels between the Malaysian case and what happened in Fiji, another Commonwealth country. The first and second Fiji military coups in 1987 were influenced by the *Taukei* ideology of Fijian supremacy when Fijian nationalists could not accept a government dominated by Indo-Fijians. Similar to Malaysia, the indigenous Fijian conviction of entitlement to political power was encouraged by the Alliance coalition government, the first post-independent government in Fiji. Even today, there is a strong element of *Taukei* ideology in Fijian politics.<sup>24</sup>

The final lesson from the Malaysian case is that, despite globalisation, ethnic nationalism – or as some writers today call it, identity politics – has never really gone away. What happened to Malaysia in late-February 2020 was a political tragedy – yet it was a political tragedy that was years in the making. The *Ketuanan Melayu Islam* ideology was never going to allow a truly multiracial and multi-religious government to hold on to power. From independence six decades ago, the Malays were told to be distrustful of the Chinese and non-Muslims because the latter, so the narrative went, wanted to

dominate them. There was no evidence of this but ethno-nationalism is based on irrational fear and ethnic solidarity against the 'other'. The Malaysian state under UMNO actively promoted this fear and the *Ketuanan Melayu Islam* ideology is now so embedded into Malay political psyche that it may take generations to remove the fear. The short-lived PH may have been the very first step towards that long journey.

One is reminded of the old French saying 'plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose' (*The more things change, the more they remain the same*).

## Notes

1. James Chin (2018) 'The Comeback Kid: Mahathir and the 2018 Malaysian General Elections', *The Round Table*, 107:4, 535–537. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2018.1494692>.
2. K. Das (1987) *Malay Dominance? The Abdullah Rubric* p. 85.
3. Strictly speaking, the Malaysian Constitution speaks of 'special position' but in common parlance, the phrase used is 'special rights'.
4. James Chin (2018) 'From Ketuanan Melayu to Ketuanan Islam: UMNO and the Malaysian Chinese' In Welsh (ed), *The End of UMNO?: Essays on Malaysia's Former Dominant Party* (New and Expanded Post GE-14 Edition, Kuala Lumpur, SIRD) pp. 255–304.
5. Published by D. Moore for Asia Pacific Press in 1970.
6. Strictly speaking, PH had the support of Parti Warisan Sabah (PWS) a regional party from East Malaysia. PWS was not a formal member of PH and did not play a role in the fall of the PH government. Thus for the purpose of this paper, when I refer to PH, I am talking about PPBM, PKR, DAP and Amanah.
7. Kafir (infidel or non-believer) is one of the most insulting term one can used against a Muslim. See 'Retract "kafir" label on Umno, PAS told', *The Star* (Malaysia) 11 September 2019.
8. PKR was represented by Azmin Ali, the party's deputy president.
9. Zainal Kling is a professor at several Malaysian universities and is well known as a leading ideologue when it comes to Malay supremacy. Unfortunately for Malaysia, there are many senior Malay academics in Malaysian universities who share his views and actively promote racism against non-Malays. See Murray Hunter, 'Malaysia's Public Universities Falling Behind', *Asia Sentinel*, 8 September 2019.
10. James Chin, 'Setting the stage for race baiting in Malaysia', *Asia Dialogue*, 18 October 2019.
11. 'Accusing DAP of "Christianisation", PAS leader cites Steven Sim's "Kingdom of God" remarks as evidence', *Malay Mail*, 18 September 2019.
12. 'Academicians who advised rulers on Rome Statute still keeping mum', *The Star*, 8 April 2019.
13. 'Daim Zainuddin to ministers in Mahathir's Malaysia: work with civil servants, ignore Najib, stop talking behind colleagues' backs', *South China Morning Post*, 7 May 2019.
14. The ISA allows for detention without trial and many DAP leaders, and other opposition leaders, were incarcerated under the ISA at one time or another in

their political career. The truly ironic thing was that many of the DAP leaders were detained on the orders of Mahathir, then leading the UMNO-led government.

15. 'Civil servants "sabotaging" new officers, defying Mahathir's orders', *Today* (Singapore), 11 September 2018.
16. 'Malays won't accept Anwar due to liberal philosophy, says Dr M', *Malaysiakini*, 12 March 2020.
17. Personal communication from a senior UMNO leader to the author. Anwar has been dogged by allegations that he was homosexual/bisexual for decades, including through videos allegedly showing him having sex with other men. In fact when Mahathir sacked Anwar as his deputy in 1998, one of the reasons he gave was that Anwar was homosexual and thus unacceptable to the Malay polity.
18. James Chin, Ultimate Game of Thrones in Malaysia, *The Interpreter*, (Lowy Institute for International Policy), 22 November 2019.
19. 'How a \$7 Billion Dispute Helped Topple Mahathir's "New Malaysia"', *Bloomberg*, 2 March 2020.
20. James Chin 'From Ketuanan Melayu to Ketuanan Islam: UMNO and the Malaysian Chinese' in *The End of UMNO? Essays on Malaysia's Dominant Party* (Welsh (ed)) (Strategic Information and Research Development Centre: Selangor, Malaysia, 2016) pp. 226–273.
21. 'Dr M: Muhyiddin willing to work with Umno, I can't, but that's politics', *Malay Mail*, 7 March 2020.
22. 'GPS will not support a coalition that includes DAP, says S'wak Dep CM', *The Star*, 28 February 2020.
23. PAS's leader Hadi Awang was quoted by a newspaper as saying '... when the time comes, the hudud and qisas laws will be extended to all non-Muslims', 'Hudud bill passed', *The Star*, 9 July 2002.
24. Robert Norton (2012) 'A Pre-eminent Right to Political Rule': Indigenous Fijian Power and Multi-ethnic Nation Building, *The Round Table*, 101:6, 521–535. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2012.749093>.